

of the Vulnerable sections' in the rest of India I

As already mentioned, the book contains a mine of information and if it does not contain enough of highbrow analytical sophistication, it should not bother an average reader. Even a professional economist will be well advised to keep it on his shelf for he too occasionally needs facts and figures and precise sequence of policy-influencing events. On some issues, for example, one pertaining to the onerous task of rotating the buffer stock he may learn a thing or two about which his knowledge is hazy. On the other hand, he may skip a few chapters, particularly those on themes like prices which need at least a minimum of theoretical underpinning. In such situations the author appears to have followed a simple device of quoting someone known to him as an economist. The outcome is not particularly illuminating. But, we

need not expect to derive all enlightenment from a single source.

Issues like procurement, public distribution and buffer stock position, which have a continuing bearing on the food economy and its management, appear to have been written about under the glow of successive good harvests — 1975-78, 1977-78, 1978-79 — which accounts for the confident tone of writing. There is therefore a certain underestimation of the travails of food management in a period of prolonged scarcity, compulsory procurement below the market prices, levy on farmers, zonal restrictions, underestimation of production by states, regional price disparities, disgruntled farmers in the surplus states and angry consumers in deficit states. Hopefully, the country will be spared such a predicament, which puts the economists and the civil servants in the clock. While the going is good why not make a Rood story of it, as the author does?

'good'. The well-known defects of our education system are discussed as defects of the formal system, and non-formal education is portrayed as free of these defects. For example, formal education is rigid, closed, and insensitive to people's needs. Non-formal education is described in terms of the opposite characteristics, ie, flexibility, openness, and ability to respond to a community's needs. I can hardly see any evidence to say that this binary vision has helped the contributors in making a realistic assessment of the immediate scope and problems of non-formal adult education in our country.

So far, the social role that non-formal education has played in India has been quite similar to that of formal education. If formal education has largely helped the urban middle class to secure its share in the elite professions, non-formal programmes too have "benefited only the upper and middle classes and the rural rich or well-to-do" (J P Naik, p 227). The book offers a very inadequate view of this aspect of the recent history of non-formal education in India. M S Adiseshiah reports that the inequalitarian effects of the Farmers' Functional Literacy Programme were expected to be countered by fiscal measures like transfer payments and taxes. He mentions that the rich farmers who benefited from the programme were found to be unwilling to accept these measures. All that he asks us to learn from this experience is that "when deciding on the kind of education and training programme that should be undertaken, there should be a conscious weighing of its cost-benefit aspect both in the narrower sense of efficiency and in the wider one of equity... and the necessary trade-off coarsely determined" (p 198-199). Perhaps any programme that increases inequalities *can* be justified in terms of a 'necessary trade-off'. But this consideration cannot be adequate for testing the implications of a massive programme like the NAEP which is supposedly committed to reducing inequalities in the social structure.

At the time the NAEP was launched, the Directorate of Adult Education had released a number of documents, including statements of policy. The vocabulary used in these documents was designed to convey the message that the NAEP was no ordinary programme of adult literacy, but a revolutionary programme of social change in which the masses would take the initiative for their own advancement. In

## Mystique of Non-Formal Education

Krishna Kumar

Non-formal Education and the NAEP edited by A B Shah and Susheela Bhan; Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1980; pp 245, Rs 65.

THIS book has thirteen articles written by people from different backgrounds that include teaching, administration, and journalism. The anthology was originally designed as a special issue of the *New Quest* for January 1978; that is, three months after the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that none of the articles deals with the neglect with which the NAEP has been treated in several states, especially after the government that had launched the programme fell from power in the Centre. In fact, S C Dube, who in the book's first article describes the programme as "a step in the right direction" (p 11), has recently offered fundamental criticism to the programme in an article in the *Times of India*.

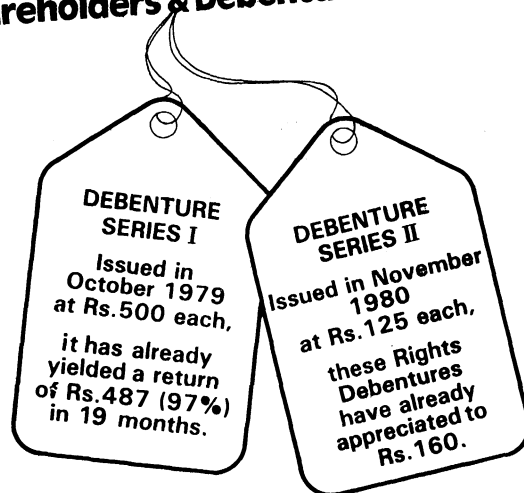
In the preface, the editors say that the developing societies are "increasingly becoming an integral part of a single world because of the revolution in communications". The problems that India has to face in this process are "poverty, widespread illiteracy, and an authoritarian social structure and cultural tradition which puts a premium on rhetoric and generalisation at the expense of

streamlined thinking on specific problems in their appropriate contexts". On reading this, I expected to find some indepth analysis of the social structure and the cultural traditions in whose context the NAEP could be examined as a programme for the development of communications. There is sporadic mention of factors like caste, class, and sex, and some writers do refer to the traditional media of oral communication and the system of work apprenticeship, but hardly any contributor offers a serious interpretation of the relation between social structure and adult learning in contemporary India.

An important underlying theme of the discussions anthologised in this book is the contrast between formal and non-formal education. The theme may be stated as: 'the more we criticise formal education, the better it is for non-formal education'. A number of writers glorify non-formal education at the expense of formal education. Why this is necessary or why this should be the only way to usher in non-formal education would be relevant questions to ask. Formal education has become the 'bad' education, and non-formal the

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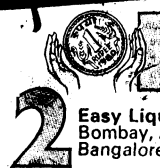


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addition to the aims of literacy, numeracy, and functional development of the learner as a worker and a citizen, the NAEP had the aim to raise the learners' 'social consciousness' which would include "an awareness of the impediments to development, of laws and government policies, and the need for poor and illiterate to organise themselves in pursuance of their legitimate interests and for group action" (Anil Bordia, p 64). An example of how the aim of raising the learners' social awareness might be accomplished can be seen in *Naya Kadam*, a literacy primer designed and published by the Directorate of Adult Education. It portrays the rise of concern among slum-dwellers regarding their living conditions, ultimately finding expression in a letter they collectively write to the municipal chairman. This example suggests that despite the high-flown language of radical social change that was used in policy statements, the core curriculum of the programme was to persuade the exploited people to believe in the system and in the means or participation that the system projects as legitimate. Of course, one can argue that a programme designed to be implemented through a variety of agencies cannot be monolithic, and indeed, one can find evidence to say that the NAEP grants have helped a few voluntary groups to pursue a curriculum which does not stop at writing a letter to the municipality.

The book does not go in detail into the ideological structure of the NAEP policies, the sociological basis and implications of the curriculum, and the methods of instruction that are being used. "Who chooses the direction? Which social groups, linked to what economic and political biases, informed by what sets of ideas?" (p 17). These are mentioned by S C Shukla as questions of "the deepest social significance", but he himself does not make an attempt to answer them. Some of the contributors do go into question of leadership of the programme, and suggest only that universities and voluntary agencies will provide better leadership than the bureaucracy will. Similarly, the question of finances has been discussed in the narrow context of budgeting. The political economy of the programme gets a paragraph worth of mention here and there. The political resistance that the programme might face receives somewhat more elaborate treatment, suggesting the expectation that the programme will achieve enough

success to attract and deserve resistance.

Over the past few years, I have watched the rapid mystification of non-formal education. What once looked like a useful means to enlarge our understanding of education has now become a cult. Non-formal education is being presented as a new beginning and a turning point rather than as a concept that might help us grasp the decay of our total education system. Its promise is being magnified beyond any proportions that experience and theory might warrant. In this atmosphere, few people are able to remember that the non-formal components of education in our society are older and more tradition-bound than the formal education system is. The challenge involved in using non-formal channels for social change is in

every respect greater than the challenge this aim would pose in formal education.

This discussion might sound a bit meaningless now that the NAEP is being phased out. The Central government seems to be determined to cripple the programme, and this it can easily do since the programme was heavily dependent on the Central government's grants. Whether or not the NAEP was intended to serve the political interests of the party (or parties) that had started it, the programme's premature phasing out is certainly political. Perhaps this experience will make us more deeply aware of the political context of education — both formal and non-formal — than we have so far given evidence of being.

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### Tata Electric Companies

TATA ELECTRIC COMPANIES' public issues are likely to evoke good response from genuine investors, particularly those desirous of selecting scrips offering a steady return with prospects of capital appreciation. The shares of Tata Hydro-Electric, Andhra Valley Power and Tata Fewer have been basically defensive shares which do not depreciate heavily in times of general depression in the stock markets. These companies have an uninterrupted dividend record of 46 years with the last dividend paid for the year ended March 1980 being 15 per cent. The shares are being offered at the par value of Rs 100 each, although their average book value is over Rs 200 and the market price around Rs 130. For 1979-80, gross block of the three companies amounted to Rs 151 crore, equity capital Rs 13.36 crore, reserves and surplus Rs 35.91 crore and gross profit Rs 16.91 crore. There is no threat of nationalisation of their electrical undertakings, since licences of all the three companies have been extended by the government of Maharashtra till the year 2000. The earning base of these companies has been strengthened in the last two years by diversifying into global contracts for commissioning and managing power stations. The returns from such operations were tax free and made a sizeable contribution to the net profits of the companies. The companies have on hand overseas contracts worth Rs 15 crore. The companies

are also branching out into the electronics field and have already completed a contract for supply of software to a computer manufacturer in the US. Based on the knowhow developed by their laboratory, the companies propose to commence manufacturing sophisticated electronic equipment. The public issues are being made to raise an aggregate amount of Rs 17.5 crore to finance the last phase of the 500 MW expansion project at Trombay. The Rs 180-crore expansion project, scheduled to be commissioned in December 1982, will yield substantial tax relief to the companies. Out of the total public issues of Rs 17.50 crore, 25 per cent has been reserved for allotment to non-resident Indians and persons of Indian origin resident abroad and another 25 per cent for existing shareholders, debenture holders, deposit holders and employees of the company. The companies have provided for the overflow of subscription from one company to another. According to Naval II Tata, chairman of the three companies, the project has the benefit of World Bank lending to the extent of half the cost and has the blessings of the Central and state governments. With the completion of the project, total capacity of the Tata Power system will increase from 614 MW to 1,114 MW. The public issues are managed by J M Financial and Investment Consultancy Services.